

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SOFIA 00499 01 OF 02 190801Z

11

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9345
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL ZAGREB

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SOFIA 0499

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BU, YO, UR

SUBJECT: THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION - BULGARIAN-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS

REF: BELGRADE 1160 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY: THE MACEDONIA QUESTION IS CAUSING POLITICAL STRAINS IN BULGARIAN-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO DO SO AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER THE DECEMBER 1975 BULGARIAN CENSUS IS TAKEN. AFTER THAT THE STRAINS MAY SUBSIDE BUT THE HISTORICAL PROBLEM WILL REMAIN, WITH ITS UPS AND DOWNS DEPENDING ON BULGARIAN ATTITUDES AND YUGOSLAVIA'S NEED FOR AN EXTERNAL DISTRACTION FROM ITS INTERNAL PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

2. ASKED BY OUR DCM RECENTLY IF DURING HIS FOUR YEARS IN SOFIA HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO DO ANYTHING TO SOFTEN THE BULGARIAN-YUGOSLAV MACEDONIA ISSUE, DEPARTING YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR DRNDIC SAID, NO. DESCRIBING IT AS HISTORICAL ISSUE HE PREDICTED IT WOULD CONTINUE SO LONG AS GOB REFUSED TO RECOGNIZE ITS MACEDONIAN MINORITY OF OVER 200,000 PEOPLE. HE CLAIMED GOB DOES RECOGNIZE OTHER MINORITIES. ON TERRITORIAL DEMANDS, HE ADMITTED GOB HAD DECLARED ITSELF COMMITTED TO ITS PRESENT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SOFIA 00499 01 OF 02 190801Z

BORDERS WITH NO TERRITORIAL CLAIMS ON ANY OTHER LANDS INCLUDING

YUGOSLAV MACEDONIA, AND THAT IT HAS FORMALLY RECOGNIZED THE MACEDONIAN REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA. QUICKLY ADDED, HOWEVER, THIS POSITION COULD BE EXPECTED TO CHANGE SHOULD THERE BE A CATASTROPHIC UPHEAVAL IN BALKANS. WHEN ASKED TO DESCRIBE SUCH SITUATION HE REPLIED "IF WE HAVE A LEADERSHIP CRISIS WHICH COULD EVOKE A CZECHOSLOVAK TYPE SITUATION". (CLEAR HE HAD IN MIND SOVIET TROOPS STORMING INTO YUGOSLAVIA WITH BULGARIANS THRUSTING INTO MACEDONIA.)

3. WE BELIEVE THAT UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES DESCRIBED BY YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR, AND IF IT APPEARED TO BE SURE THING WHICH WOULD BE CONTAINED AS IN CZECHOSLOVAK CASE, BULGARIANS MIGHT TAKE ACTION HE SUGGESTED. BUT ASIDE FROM SUCH UNLIKELY DRASTIC DEVELOPMENTS, IT IS DOUBTFUL BULGARIANS INTEND SERIOUSLY TO INTERFERE IN YUGOSLAV MACEDONIAN AFFAIRS. THEY CAN BE EXPECTED, HOWEVER, TO CONTINUE EFFORTS TO ASSIMILATE BULGARIAN MACEDONIAN MINORITY AND WILL CONTINUE TO DENY EXISTENCE OF SUCH A MINORITY. DURING 1975, YUGOSLAVIA IS CERTAIN TO ACCELERATE ITS PROPAGANDA EFFORTS DIRECTED TOWARD BULGARIAN MINORITIES, PARTICULARLY MACEDONIANS, AND ALSO ITS POLITICAL PRESSURE ON GOB AND BCP.

4. ABOVE POSITIONS SEEM TO HAVE TWO CONCRETE BASES - GOY POLICY OF CREATING BORDER PROBLEMS IN ORDER TO REALIZE MORE UNITY AT HOME, AND UPCOMING BULGARIAN CENSUS SCHEDULED TO BE TAKEN IN DECEMBER 1975. THIS WILL BE THE THIRD CENSUS CONDUCTED IN BULGARIA SINCE WORLD WAR II; ONE IN 1956 WHEN 180,000 PERSONS DECLARED THEMSELVES MACEDONIANS; AND ONE IN 1965 WHICH OMITTED QUESTION THAT COULD HAVE IDENTIFIED MACEDONIANS. WE EXPECT THAT 1975 CENSUS WILL ALSO NOT MENTION MACEDONIANS.

5. BECAUSE OF THE SENSITIVITY OF BOTH COUNTRIES TOWARD ISSUE AND IF ALL OTHER THINGS REMAIN FAIRLY STABLE, WE SEE NO IMPROVEMENT IN BULGARIAN-YUGOSLAV POLITICAL RELATIONS OF WHICH MACEDONIAN ISSUE IS SO MUCH A PART, UNTIL AT LEAST AFTER DUST OF CENSUS HAS SETTLED, PERHAPS SOMETIME IN 1976. UNDERSTANDABLY, BULGARIANS GIVE LITTLE OR NO PUBLICITY TO ISSUE AND DO NOT PUBLICLY COUNTER THE OVERHEATED YUGOSLAV CHARGES. THIS DOES NOT MEAN GOB DOES NOT CONTRIBUTE TO

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SOFIA 00499 01 OF 02 190801Z

PROBLEM. BULGARIAN EFFORTS AT ASSIMILATION WILL INCLUDE CONTINUING HEAVY INVESTMENTS AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT ATTENTION IN THE PIRIN (MACEDONIAN) AREA; MORE HIGH LEVEL VISITS AND PATRIOTIC SPEECHES LIKE CHAIRMAN ZHIVKOV'S IN JUNE 1974 AND HIS DAUGHTER'S (LUDMILLA ZHIVKOVA) JANUARY HISTORICAL LECTURE AND UNITY PEP TALK, AND SOME REPRESSION OF UNAUTHORIZED POLITICAL ACTIVITY AMONG MACEDONIANS. ALTHOUGH GOB INTIMIDATION NO DOUBT OCCURS, WE HAVE NO HARD EVIDENCE

OF RZPGRESSION BEYOND YUGOSLAV PRESS REPORTS OF ARRESTS, TRIALS, AND PAST DEPORTATIONS, BUT THE CHARACTER AND HISTORY OF THE BCP MAKES THIS A REAL POSSIBILITY. OTHER MEASURES PERHAPS MORE DIRECTLY AIMED AT BAITING THE YUGOSLAVS INCLUDE SO-CALLED SCHOLARLY ARTICLES BASED ON GREATER BULGARIAN EMPIRES AND LANGUAGE; AND MOST RECENTLY BESTOWING A HIGH AWARD ON VENKO MARKOVSKI, A MACEDONIAN OUT OF FAVOR IN BELGRADE AND DESCRIBED AS A COMINFORMIST. PERHAPS RECENT TRIBUTES TO SVETOZAR MARKOVIC, AN EARLY SOCIALIST DEAR TO HEARTS OF MACEDONIANS AND SERBS, WILL ATTRACT ADDITIONAL BELGRADE FIRE. ALTHOUGH SUCH PROPAGANDA ACTIVITIES ARE IN THEMSELVES TRIVIAL, BULGARIANS KNOW THEY ENRAGE YUGOSLAVS WHOSE OUTBURSTS WILL THEN PUT THEM IN POSITION OF APPEARING TO BE REAL TROUBLEMAKERS.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 SOFIA 00499 02 OF 02 191052Z

15

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SOFIA 0499

6. WE DOUBT BULGARIAN ACTION IS INITIATED FROM MOSCOW BUT IT IS CERTAINLY APPROVED AND CAREFULLY WATCHED THERE. PERHAPS TEMPO OF ISSUE HAS SOME CONNECTION WITH SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS. HOWEVER, EVEN IF MOSCOW WAS NOT IN THE PICTURE AT ALL, A BULGARIAN CENSUS WOULD CREATE TENSIONS; AND IF YUGOSLAVIA NEEDS AN EXTERNAL DISTRACTION FOR ITS POPULATION, BULGARIA IS A PLAUSIBLE TARGET AS A TRADITIONALLY UNRELIABLE NEP HBOR.

7. BULGARIAN-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS OUTSIDE THE POLITICAL SPHERE REMAIN GOOD, WITH TRADE AND RELATED ACTIVITIES EXPANDING AND PARTY EXCHANGES IN NON-POLITICAL AREAS CONTINUING AT A GOOD PACE. THE POLITICAL FRONT IS A DIFFERENT MATTER. ZHIVKOV'S VISIT TO BELGRADE, MUCH DISCUSSED IN 1973 AND EARLY '74, IS NOT NOW MENTIONED. FOREIGN MINISTER MLADENOV WAS SCHEDULED TO RETURN YUGOSLAV FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT LAST OCTOBER; IT WAS PUT OFF UNTIL NOVEMBER, THEN RESCHEDULED FOR JANUARY OR FEBRUARY; AND NOW YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR CLAIMS IT WILL NOT TAKE PLACE IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE SINCE BULGARIAN FOREIGN MINISTER "IS SUPPOSEDLY TOO BUSY". APPARENTLY GOB IS DELAYING VISIT PROBABLY TO SPARE MLADENOV A LACING ON MACEDONIA ISSUE WHICH COULD ONLY RESULT IN AN OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC DISAGREE-
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PAGE 02 SOFIA 00499 02 OF 02 191052Z

MENT. WE UNDERSTAND MACEDONIAN ISSUE HAS NOT BEEN OFFICIALLY RAISED WITH ANY OF OTHER VISITING DIGNITARIES, EITHER HERE OR IN BELGRADE. MLADENOV WILL PROBABLY NOT VISIT BELGRADE UNTIL 1976, UNLESS SITUATION CHANGES A GOOD DEAL.

3. AS A FOOTNOTE, DEPARTING YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR DRNDIC WHO WILL BE IN CHARGE OF NON-ALIGNED AFFAIRS IN YUGOSLAV MFA, HAS NOT BEEN GIVEN ORDER OF MADARA USUALLY PRESENTED TO DEPARTING AMBASSADORS FROM FRIENDLY NATIONS NOR HAS HE BEEN FETED AT HIGHEST LEVEL. OFFICIAL DINNER WAS HOSTED BY DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER MINCHEV, AND HIGHEST RANKING OFFICIAL OBSERVED AT DRNDIC'S FAREWELL RECEPTION WAS AGAIN MINCHEV. ALMOST ANY DEPARTING AMBASSADOR COULD EXPECT BETTER TREATMENT, TO SAY NOTHING OF REPRESENTATIVE OF A SOCIALIST COUNTRY.
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